

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 HAVANA 01902 060708Z

ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM USINT HAVANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2424

S E C R E T HAVANA 1902

NODIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC CU

SUBJ: SECURITY GUARD DETAINED AND RELEASED

1. SUMMARY: USMC SECURITY GUARD WAS DETAINED BY CUBAN BORDER GUARD TROOPS AT 1515 LOCAL TIME, WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, FOR ALLEGED PHOTOGRAPHY OF CUBAN MILITARY INSTALLATION. GUARD WAS RELEASED TO ACTING USINT CHIEF WITHOUT CHARGES BEING FILED AT 2130 LOCAL TIME, JULY 5. SECURITY GUARD TO HIS KNOWLEDGE DID NOT TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS OF ANY MILITARY INSTALLATION. ON BASIS OF AVAILABLE EVIDENCE, INCIDENT MAY BE RESULT OF OVERSEALOUSNESS ON PART OF LOCAL BORDER GUARDS, ALTHOUGH OTHER EXPLANATIONS ARE NOT EXCLUDED. END SUMMARY.

2. USMC SECURITY GUARD SERGEANT KURTIS LEON JOHNSON WAS DETAINED BY THREE CUBAN BORDER GUARD TROOPS AT 1515 LOCAL TIME, JULY 5, NEAR VILLAGE OF BOCA DE JARUCO, WHILE ON BICYCLE TRIP. JOHNSON WAS TAKING OCCASIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF LANDSCAPE AND RURAL SCENES USING PENTAX CAMERA WITH 230MM ZOOM LENS. JOHNSON WAS HELD FOR ABOUT HOUR BY ROADSIDE, AND THEN DIRECTED TO BORDER GUARD STATION AT GUANABO. AT ABOUT 1840, HE WAS MOVED TO HAVANA STATE SECURITY HEADQUARTERS. NO PHYSICAL VIOLENCE WAS APPLIED AGAINST HIM.

3. ACTING USINT CHIEF (GLASSMAN) WAS NOTIFIED OF DETENTION AT 1845

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LOCAL TIME, JULY 5, BY MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS CHIEF OF PROTOCOL (MELENDEZ) LATTER PROMISED ACCESS TO JOHNSON, JULY 6, BUT ACTING USINT CHIEF REQUESTED IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF JOHNSON CITING VERY SERIOUS POSSIBLE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS INCIDENT.

4. AT 1945 LOCAL TIME, ACTING USINT CHIEF WAS TAKEN TO HOME OF CUBAN VICE-PRESIDENT CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ WHO SAID THAT INCIDENT

WAS SERIOUS, BUT THAT FIDEL CASTRO HAD DECIDED
TO RELEASE JOHNSON TO USINT.

5. AT 2130 LOCAL TIME, ACTING USINT CHIEF WAS TAKEN BY CHIEF OF
PROTOCL TO STATE SECURITY HEADQUARTERS (VILLA MARISTA)
WHERE HONSON WAS HANDED OVER. AFTER BEING TOLD BY HONSON THAT HE
HAD NOT PHOTOGRAPHED MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, ACTING USINT CHIEF
TOLD CHIEF OF PROTOCOL AND STATE SECURITY OFFICIALS THAT DETENTION
APPEARED TOTALLY UNWARRANTED. STATE SECURITY PERSONNEL REPLIED
THAT BORDER GUARDS, NOT STATE SECURITY, HAD DETAINED JOHNSON.
CHIEF OF PROTOCOL IMPLIED THAT BORDER GUARDS MAY HAVE BEEN
OVERLY ZEALOUS AND CITED VICE-PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ' STATEMENT TO
ACTING USINT CHIEF THAT USINT SHOULD TAKE MEASURES TO PREVENT SUCH
INCIDENTS FROM RECURRING AND CUBANS WHOULD DO LIKEWISE. CONTRARY
TO EARLIER STATEMENT BY RODRIGUEZ, CHIEF OF PROTOCOL AGREED TO
RETURN SEIZED CAMERA EQUIPMENT AFTER EXAMINATION.

6. MORE DETAILS AND ACTION RECOMMONDATIONS WILL BE TRANSMITTED IN
MORNING, JULY 6. USINT AND NCOIC HERE HAVE DEBRIEFED
JOHNSON. WE REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENT INFORM APPROPRIATE USMC
OFFICER OF INCIDENT, WITH CAVEAT THAT INFORMATION BE HELD CLOSELY
UNTIL DEPARTMENT DECIDES ON APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.

7. JOHNSON IS SCHEDULED TO DEPART HAVANA AT 1000 LOCAL TIME, JULY
6. POST RECOMMENDS THAT HE DEPART CUBA URGENTLY AS PLANNED.
CONSULAR OFFICER WILL ACCOMPANY HIM AT AIRPORT. JOHNSON WILL BE
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ADVISED TO BE IN CONTACT WITH NCOIC KINGSTON (JAMAICA) IF USMC
OR DEPARTMENT HAS MESSAGE FOR HIM.
LANE

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 06 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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TAGS: ASEC, PINS, CU, US, (JOHNSON, KURTIS LEON)
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